

Minneapolis Veterans Medical Foster Home Program

The US Department of Veterans Affairs has a national sense of duty to help Veterans age in place. In response to the growing number of aging Veterans and those with disabilities, the Veterans Medical Foster Home Program (MFH) was developed as a pilot project that began in 2004. Since this time the Veterans Medical Foster Home has grown to be a leading example of how a family type environment can provide individualized, high quality, comprehensive care to our Veterans in need.

Here in Minneapolis, our Medical Foster Care program partners with licensed family homes within the Twin Cities area. The homes currently involved in our local program are able to provide care for Veterans with complex medical and psychosocial needs through the end of life.

The care ratio is small, with a maximum of 3 residents per home. Veterans enjoy their own rooms, home cooked meals and access to a variety of ways to spend their leisure time. A key component to the Medical Foster Home program is the additional support of our VA Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) team. This is a comprehensive team that visits the Veteran and the caregiver on a consistent schedule. The Home Based Primary Care team is an interdisciplinary team that includes the following: Primary Care provider, RN/LPN, Social Worker, Psychology, Dietitian, and an Occupational therapist. In addition to the support from the Home Based Primary Care team, the Medical Foster Home Coordinators visit the homes on a monthly basis.

All of the Medical Foster Homes are provided with additional support and education during the mandatory bi-annual trainings and are inspected annually but the Medical Foster Home coordinator and the Home Based Primary Care team.

We are currently looking for new caregivers to help with our mission to help Veteran's age in place as well as Veteran's needing a safe, loving home.

For more information call 612-467-2619 https://www.minneapolis.va.gov/services/medical_foster_home.asp

To share more information about our program and how we have reached across multiple generations, please read the story below about our Veteran Vern and his Medical Foster Home caregiver Chrissy.



Vern's Story of Prosper

Vern enlisted in the United States Army in 1967 at the age of seventeen. He thought joining the Army would be a great way for him to develop and grow. He was deployed to Vietnam where he served in the infantry. When Vern returned home from his deployment, he was sad about how they were welcomed back. It lead him into feeling despaired about society in general. After discharging from the military, Vern worked a variety of community jobs. When he was no longer able to live on his own he spent time in a nursing home after a stroke. The nursing home called MFH to help Vern return to the community.

When the MFH Coordinator initially met with Vern, he shared that his spirits were diminished. He wanted to

find a family setting that would have a consistent caregiver who would become knowledgeable of his needs every day. Vern wanted to find a place that he could call “home.”

While in the MFH program, Vern benefits from the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) team. As mentioned above, the HBPC team provides a comprehensive primary care team at the MFH. A Nurse Case Manager goes out to the home routinely to assess needs, concerns, and medications and provide support. A Social Worker visits to assist with support and access to any services or benefits that will enhance the Veteran’s care. The Occupational Therapist visits to address any medical or adaptive needs that will allow the home to be more accessible for Vern and the MFH caregiver. The team Dietitian supports the home with providing education and consultation to address the dietary needs of Vern. Another key team member is the HBPC team psychologist. They provide support to help Vern cope with life issues, such as his time in service. Vern noted, “I’ve come to live here, this experience has restored my faith in those liberties that I fought for.”

Fast forward five years later. Vern remains in MFH and is thriving.

Vern’s current goal is being able to walk without assistance. He is very motivated!! With the support from the HBPC team and the MFH caregiver, Vern is able to participate in daily exercises right in the home to help maintain his strength and endurance. Additional accomplishments over the past 5 years while in the MFH include reduction with his daily medications and better control of his Diabetes where he no longer needs to take insulin. The support of his caregiver has also helped him to continue his sobriety and quit smoking. Every Monday a music therapist comes to the house. This has been a weekly tradition which Vern really enjoys because he gets to request songs he wants to hear. For the first time in years, Vern feels a sense of love and family every day. He enjoys getting up to being with people he cares for and that care for him.

Outside the home Vern has participated in fishing trips, assisted with growing a garden, attended a community day program, and has attended a week long Veterans camp. An example of benefits the VA provides to support leisure time outside of the home is the VA funded community Adult Day (ADHC) program. Vern enjoys getting out a few times a week to interact with his friends.

His private room has wonderful sunshine and a patio. His caregivers’ new twins call him “Grandpa Vern.” He smiles every time when one of the 3 dogs sits next to him and they cuddle up warmly. Over the years of love and care Vern enjoys calling Chrissy “Mama Bear.” “I am going to stay here, even thru my final days.” Chrissy shared that after having the honor of serving a few Veterans in her home, seeing how all



Veterans thrive, she loves being a part of MFH and giving back. Her goal is to continue to care for Veterans for years to come.

Chrissy is an experienced caregiver. She became a PCA (Personal Care Assistant) at the age of fifteen and felt the calling to care for others. She enlisted in the United States Marines Corps where she served before becoming a caregiver in the Medical Foster Home Program. Chrissy worked in a nursing home but felt frustrated and rushed. Chrissy wanted to provide more dedicated time to care for each Veteran.

Once Chrissy started working with the MFH she took notice that she was part of changing the lives of those she served. "If you can't change the world you can help 3 people at a time... why not do it. From the day they move in I let them know that I am going to be there for them, and that we are going to take care of them and "not let them down." Vern benefits from MFH and HBPC because he receives consistent caregivers and case management. Knowing the Vern so well allows Chrissy and HBPC find interventions that are needed to comfort him each and every day.

Upon closing the visit with Vern and Chrissy, Vern said "I love you" to Chrissy and Ty (her husband). Chrissy responded, "I love you too Vern."

MFH is love and family. It is a home away a home...It is where hero's meet angels.

Written by Minneapolis MFH Staff:

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